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Netrunner Championships Set Stage for World Domination 1999

by Jens Kreutzer
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The last couple of months saw some interesting tourney action as France, Germany, the U. K., and the Northwest of the U.S. held their Championships in the cities of Paris, Schweinfurt, Loughborough, and Seattle, respectively. While attendance could have been higher, it's still a success when a reasonable number of players undertake a long journey through meatspace (we're talking 800 km by car, or even a trip by plane) to slug it out with the best.

Four champions found their ways into the **Netrunner** Hall of Fame: Laurent Lavenant (FRA), Daniel Schneider (GER), Philip Harvey (UK) and Chris Phillips (CAN). Congratulations! You can read more about these tourneys, the champs and their decks on page 3, where two of them (all I could reach) get their say in an interview.

As the year draws to a close, organization of World Domination 1999 is already underway. Instead of Gridlock tourneys as qualifiers, there will be a special world-wide qualification weekend sometime in early spring 1999, with WD following in late spring or summer 1999. It is still an open question whether the National and Regional winners will qualify automatically; this is to be decided by a future WD committee. The TRC is now looking for volunteers to staff this committee; if you'd like to volunteer, just contact Scott Dickie <sdickie@pcisys.net>.

State of the Corp - December 1998

by Jennifer Clarke Wilkes
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It has been an exciting year for **Netrunner**, both in the TRC and here at Wizards of the Coast. We've seen the resumption of official DCI™ sanctioning, and the input of TRC organizers has been invaluable. We're still experiencing some growing pains, but on the whole I think official sanctioning is a good thing for the game. And Wizards is committed to further support for this and its other "backlist" games in 1999.

Of course, the most exciting part of that commitment is Wizards' promise to release some new **Netrunner** cards next year! At this point I don't have many details, and I don't want to indulge in idle speculation. What I do know is that the number of cards will probably be rather limited, so Wizards can judge the level of player support out there. These cards are likely to be drawn from the *Silent Impact*™ expansion, since it's already designed—why invent new cards and commission new art? They'll be released by the fall of next year, but possibly earlier. The schedule hasn't been worked out yet.

In addition, the new brand manager (Andrew Finch) has given his OK to distributing cards as needed for promoting the game, including major support for large tournaments. I expect there will be several national and large regional events next year. Andrew has also said he'd support large events with custom T-shirts–look for more details soon. I also look forward to experimental league-style play in 1999.

All in all, it looks like 1999 will be a remarkable year for **Netrunner**. To all of you, as always, thanks for your hard work. Have a great holiday!

New Editor for the TRQ

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Starting with this issue of the TRQ, Scott Dickie has conferred the position of TRQ editor on me (Jens Kreutzer). Scott is more than busy with his other TRC duties and was looking for a respite. I hope I will be able to continue what he has done for the TRQ up till now.

Here's what I'm envisioning for future issues: Major features will be – as before – the latest news on important tourneys like World Domination and other news concerning **Netrunner** in general. Jennifer Clarke Wilkes, our WotC contact, will continue to give us the coveted scoop on developments behind the scenes in her column *"State of the Corp"*.

In the new column *"Elementary, my dear Wilson"*, I'd like to focus on one of the better-known **Netrunner** deckbuilding strategies, looking at a new one in each issue of the TRQ. Some of the more advanced players might not find this very instructive, but think of it as a kind of "agenda" hidden in the "Archives" of the TRQ back issues that newcomers to the game can use to get an overview of what's waiting for them.

From this issue on, I invite your comments and suggestions in "emails to the editor" (I might even publish them). Likewise, if you want to write an article for the TRQ, please feel free to mail it to my email address; chances are that it will get printed (with full credit, of course). I am especially looking for new brain-twisting **Netrunner** puzzles for publication.

Yet another column is the *"Did you know?"*, which features bits and pieces of **Netrunner** trivia, mostly taken from Scott's website *The Short Circuit* and including data that was compiled earlier by Australian David Mar (and originally by Foolkiller). I realize it's hard to give proper credit to the original contributors, but if you spot some of your own gems of wisdom here, just tell me that it was you who found out about it, and I will rectify this in the following issue.

Yours truly,
Jens "Tinweasel" Kreutzer

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"Elementary, my dear Wilson!"
- Famous Netrunner Stacks -
#1: Psycho Tycho

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The name "Psycho Tycho" induces fear in all but the most hard-boiled Runners – this Corp concept is aptly named because of its speedy avenue to victory, finishing Runners off like a psychotic killer if they don't do something about it *fast*. This speed (the deck wins by turn 5 most of the time, but a turn 3 win is possible) puts an enormous psychological pressure on the Runner as he or she sees the game slipping away, which might also be alluded to by the term "Psycho Tycho".

Originally designed by people such as David Liu, the deck's potential was quickly realized by players all over the world (such as Brandon Charnesky, who took first place at Origins '98). In nothing flat, Psycho Tycho decks became a pest. Most **Netrunner** players frown upon the deck a bit nowadays; while it's innovative and extremely strong in competition, it isn't very difficult to play and no fun at all to play *against.* A positive side to the deck is that you can build it without any rare cards, so newcomers to the tourney scene might be forgiven if they try their luck with Psycho Tycho once or twice, just to get the feel for it. But more and more players prefer to design their own strategies rather than bein copycats. What's more, there are several Runner stacks out there specifically designed to beat Psycho Tycho (a bit more on that below). Maybe the deck's days are numbered - in the German Nationals, not a single player used it.

The strategy of Psycho Tycho decks takes the fast advancing of agendas to the limit, exploiting the combo Tycho Extension, Project Consultants, and ACME Savings and Loan. As soon as the first Tycho Extension is scored (either by slow-advancing it behind cheap Ice in the early turns, or by saving bits and scoring it out of hand with Project Consultants), you can win in one turn if one Tycho, one ACME, and one Consultants are in your hand. You install the Agenda, then install ACME and rez it – which nets you the 12 bits you need for the Consultants. That ACME also costs you an Agenda point is irrelevant, because the two Tychos give you one point more than you need to win. The synergy of these three cards is almost uncanny, which is why time and again players have been tempted to call for bans, restrictions, or "errata".

This trio forms the core of a Psycho Tycho deck, but apart from that, there are many variants. Most decks use lots of cheap ice like Filter and Data Wall to keep out the Runner in the early game, but some also include more expensive ice cards to fall back on if the game goes longer. Card drawing is important to get the winning combo as soon as possible; that's why Annual Reviews find their way into Psycho Tycho decks very often as well. You might even play "Euro-style", using a couple of Euromarket Consortiums to combine card-drawing ability with more room in HQ to hide the agendas. Some devious Corps even go for a sprinkling of tag'n'bag.

This is what a very basic Psycho Tycho deck might look like (50 cards):

5 Tycho Extension	**5 ACME Savings and Loan**
8 Project Consultants	**8 Annual Reviews**
10 Filter	**10 Data Wall**
4 Efficiency Experts or Accounts Receivable	

You'd probably like to exchange the Efficiency Experts for even more Project Consultants and ACMEs, if you have the cards, or increase the number of bit-gainers so that you can fast-advance the first Tycho by accumulating 12 bits by turn two. Experiment until you find something that works for you.

A Runner who dares to face Psycho Tycho has to realize and exploit its weaknesses. Usually the Corp is hoping that the Runner will need a couple of turns to get icebreakers installed – afterwards, the cheap ice won't present much of an obstacle. ACMEs are easily trashed, and without them, the Corp is seriously slowed down. Moreover, Tycho Extension is a danger as well as a boon: Just like the Corp, the Runner only needs to score two of them to win. Thus, if the Runner gets a couple of bits and Corrosion/Codecracker going in the first turn, all it takes to snatch victory from the Corp are some All-Hands and Rush Hours.

Did you know?
Bits and pieces from the NR trivia collection
#1: Schlaghund

by Jens Kreutzer
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One of the heavy-hitter cards in **Netrunner**, Schlaghund has always been a favourite of Corp players who seek a drastic approach when preventing felons from trespassing in their data forts. But what does this strange word mean, anyway? "Schlaghund" [SHLAHK-hoont] is a German compound, although there's no such term in German currently (that might change in 2020, though). It basically means 'hit-dog', from *schlagen,* 'to hit, to strike' and *Hund,* 'dog'.

The sick concept behind it is: A dog is fitted with cybernetic enhancements (and possibly some sort of "remote control") and then packed full with explosives. The Black Ops department of your Corp then sics it on the hapless Runner - as soon as the dog has tracked the offender down, it simply ... explodes.

It is very likely that this idea originally hails from one of William Gibson's novels, *Count Zero*. Gibson, a Canadian, is *the* most famous cyberpunk author – the whole idea of a virtual-reality interface for the Net that's directly hooked up to the brain comes from his book *Neuromancer*. The following is a quote from *Count Zero* (New York 1987: Ace Books; start of the first chapter):

"They set a slamhound on Turner's trail in New Delhi, slotted it to his pheromones and the color of his hair. It caught up with him on a street called Chandni Chauk and came scrambling for his rented BMW through a forest of bare brown legs and pedicab tires. Its core was a kilogram of recrystallized hexogene and flaked TNT.

He didn't see it coming. The last he saw of India was the pink stucco façade of a place called the Khush-Oil Hotel."

Why people translated 'slamhound' into the German is anybody's guess...

(You can read more about *Schlaghunde* [SHLAHK-hoon-duh, the grammatically correct plural] in R. Talsorian's supplement *Rache Bartmoss' Brainware Blowout*, p. 98.)

Interview with the Champions

by Jens Kreutzer
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Here are a couple of questions I asked Chris Phillips and Daniel Schneider (I could not get hold of French Champion Laurent Lavenant and U.K. Champion Philip Harvey in time, unfortunately). Chris won the U.S. Northwest Regional Championship, and Daniel is the German National Champion.

Please tell our readers a bit about yourselves first of all.

Chris: I am 27. From age 20-26, I was a computer technician. For the last year I have been doing freelance computer consulting, learning computer programming and acting as a domestic (taking care of the house whilst my Significant Other makes the money).

Daniel: I've always lived in Kiel in the cold, far north of Germany. I'm 27 now, and I'm finally about to finish my studies in maths and economics. Apart from **Netrunner**, my most important hobbies so far were: a) long-time gamemaster for R. Talsorian's **Cyberpunk** Roleplaying game b) full-time skateboarder (no longer) c) semi-professional techno DJ (almost retired) d) team captain of a tourney-level paintball team.

Well, what do you know: I'll be 27 in January too. But that was just an aside. Now, each of you has just won a major ***Netrunner*** *tournament. We're naturally itching for an answer to the following two questions: What kind of Corp deck were you using?*

Chris: A Psycho Tycho variant. Not a very strong one. It didn't have much draw power (a few Night and Day Shifts), and only five or so ACME S&Ls, and about the same number of Project Consultants. Relatively ice heavy (18-20). Average time to win was around seven rounds. Not the typical five.

Daniel: I'm still not sure whether to publish my deck list or not. In the case of my Corp deck, "Money for Nothing," I've heard so many rumors told about it and seen so many surprised faces that most people might be disappointed to see its simple structure. The key card is Corporate Negotiating Center (in multiples, of course). This suicidal card is used so seldom that many people simply don't know how to play against it. But it took me several months to make that deck strong against various Runner tactics.

What kind of Runner deck did you use?

Chris: A Precision Bribery/Time to Collect variant, an extremely synergetic deck. It used Loans from Chiba for its money engine, Fall Guys for tag prevention, and Scaldan with Code Viral Cache for the killing blow. Everything worked off of the Time to Collects (the Loans, Fall Guys, and Code Viral Caches). It had Junkyard BBS to complete the lock, and used N.E.T.O., Short Circuit, and a few Jack'n'Joes for deck manipulation.

Daniel: My Runner deck is called "57 Organs" (guess why?). It won every game, and the games weren't easy. I hope to have finally broken the "45 cards is best" rule. One part of the deck was well-known power: Bodyweights/Organ Donor/MIT bit and card engine; two different breaker suites plus Personal Touch to adapt to various defences; several surprise cards like Corporate Ally, Terrorist Reprisal, Lucidrine™ Booster Drug, Priority Wreck, Hidden Resources...

Any comments on what it takes strategically or decision-wise to win with these decks?

Chris: Psycho Tycho requires virtually no skill. I usually use the term "brain-dead stupid" to describe its ease of play. Score the first Tycho, draw until you have a second Tycho, a Project Consultants, and an ACME S&L. Win. The Precision Bribery/TTC takes a little more finesse, but it still is a formula win. Get lock. Remove any subsidiary data forts, get Scaldan out, run HQ, drop Code Viral Cache, wait for win.

Daniel: For both decks: Adapt your play style to opponent's tactics. Many constructed decks are well-known, and the better players often know exactly how to play best against these decks after the first few cards are on the table. Each of my decks allows several different winning strategies.

There's been a lot of talk going on concerning so-called "cheese" decks (i.e., decks belonging to a well-established set of very powerful strategies that are just not very "innovative" anymore) in the Constructed format. Do you perceive the ubiquity of these decks as a danger to the fun aspect of Constructed tourneys?

Chris: Yes. It limits the play field. If you want to win a tournament (which I hope is part of everyone's goal), then you are limited to playing two decks for each side. The basic truth is that it's boring to play against the same decks all the time.

Daniel: Yes. Constructing extraordinary decks from the big pool of cards and combinations is lots of fun for many players (including me), but if you want to build decks with a good chance of winning against the most cheesy decks around, your choice of weapons becomes very limited.

Do you think that there exists a feasible way of discouraging the overuse of these decks, and would you like to see this method implemented in future tourneys?

Chris: I think that banning key cards would be the most feasible way. The ban list would have to include only about five or six cards. I would love to see this implemented for future tourneys. For the record: I'd hate to see over-banning (more than the problematic five or six cards) or global restrictions like "no more than four of any card".

Daniel: One thing's for sure: Limiting the format (for example to 1/15) is not a solution; it makes things even worse. I don't see any problems with banning a few cards: Enterprise, Inc., Shields, Identity Donor or Time to Collect. But if you take the example of the "Psycho Tycho" Corp deck, there is no individual card in there that deserves to be banned. I could imagine a method that prevents abusive decks and combos, but such a method would be complex, and it would always be difficult to rule what was cheesy and what was not. The best solution is clearly to build decks that beat the cheesy decks of today. This is much easier for the Runner than for the Corp, though.

The tourneys you played in also featured a Sealed-Deck event. Is there a favourite maxim that goes around in your head when you're playing Runner in a Sealed game?

Chris: If the cards in my hand are replaceable with other cards in my deck, then I run often, frequently forcing the Corp to rez ice (and thus hopefully keeping it poor).

What about the Corp?

Daniel: "Hurry up!" In an average starter you don't have many cards that let you win the endgame. Score the agendas as soon as possible, but don't forget to protect your R&D and HQ.

Do you ever play with Decks or Virus programs in Sealed Deck?

Chris: Yes. I'll often play with the infamous Parraline 5750 if I am short on MU. Otherwise usually not. I am quite fond of Pattel's Virus, and will also use Taxman, Cascade, the rare Proteus Viri (if I am so lucky) just to harass the Corp and put them off guard.

Daniel: Normally I take one deck into my stack. It has to be cheap. Often I only need the extra MU, but sometimes I combine a cheap base link with PK-6089a, Pandora's Deck or Techtronica Utility Suit. I never had much success with decks that provide bits for icebreakers in Sealed. And I never play with Virus programs. Never.

Any message you would like to get across to our readers?

Chris: Thank you for playing **Netrunner** and keeping the game alive.

Thank you very much for the interview, and merry Christmas!